

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11762: GDS
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SUBJ: PRESS CAMPAIGN
REF: A. STATE 076816, B. BUCHAREST 2473

1. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED APPOINTMENT WITH MACOVESCU APRIL 8 TO MENTION ANTI-US ASPECTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE. I DID SO IN CONTEXT OF MACOVESCU'S AND MY TALK OF APRIL 3 WHEN I HAD STRESSED NEED TO KEEP IN CLOSE COMMUNICATION WHEN WE WERE EXPERIENCING PERIODS OF SOME STRESS.

2. SINCE ANTI-WESTERN AND ANTI-US ASPECTS OF CAMPAIGN HAD QUIETED DOWN BY THE TIME I SAW MACOVESCU (BUCHAREST 2606), I TOOK APPROACH OF TELLING MACOVESCU THAT WE HAD REPORTED TO WASHINGTON THE MEDIA TREATMENT ACCORDED THE WEST (INCLUDING THE US) AND THAT THE REACTION I HAD RECEIVED FROM WASHINGTON TO THE CAMPAIGN WAS ONE OF LACK OF UNDERSTANDING. MACOVESCU INTERJECTED THAT I PROBABLY THEREFORE HADN'T EXPLAINED THINGS ALL THAT WELL. I REPLIED THAT AS I HAD TOLD HIM EARLIER, I, LIKE WASHINGTON, COULD UNDERSTAND CRITICISM OF THE DEFECTS OF OUR SOCIETY BUT NOT THE SORT OF EXAGGERATED CAMPAIGN THAT HAD BEEN LAUNCHED. I ADDED PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE FOCUS ON A FEW

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ITEMS IN THE AMERICAN PRESS WHEN THE OVERWHELMING VOLUME AND TONE OF COMMENTARY ON THE EARTHQUAKE HAD BEEN ONE OF SYMPATHY. SIMILARLY, THE FEELING IN WASHINGTON WAS THAT THE COVERAGE OF GOMA WAS REASONABLY OBJECTIVE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. IN ANY CASE, I NOTED THAT I WAS GLAD TO SEE THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAD SLACKED.

3. MACOVESCU LIMITED HIMSELF TO REITERATING BRIEFLY HIS PRINCIPAL POINT IN OUR APRIL 3 TALK, THAT ROMANIA HAD TO HIT BACK AT TIMES IN THE FACE OF THE POUNDING IT KEPT GETTING. HIS IMAGE WAS THAT ROMANIA WAS LIKE A BOXER WHO IS USED TO TAKING A LOT OF PUNISHMENT BUT AT SOME STAGE GETS FED UP AND STRIKES BACK, WHILE THE US RESEMBLED A SENSITIVE YOUNG LADY WHO IS NOT USED TO UNPLEASANT WORDS.

3. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE SINCE REPORTED, THE ANTI-EMIGRATION, ANTI-WESTERN CAMPAIGN PICKED UP AGAIN SOMEWHAT OVER THE WEEKEND. THE MORE EXPLICIT ANTI-WESTERN PART HAS DROPPED OFF IN THE LAST TWO DAYS, THOUGH THE ANTI-EMIGRATION THEME RETAINS, AND RFE IS ATTACKED AGAIN THIS MORNING IN SCINTEIA FOR ITS FALSE CHAMPIONING OF HUMAN RIGHTS. I TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT ANY ATTACK ON CEAUSESCU, BE IT IN THE FOREIGN PRESS OR IN SLOGANS SHOUTED OUTSIDE THE ROMANIAN LIBRARY, WILL RAISE HACKLES HERE. STILL, MY OWN JUDGMENT IS THAT RFE'S CONSTANT EMPHASIS ON THE DISSIDENT QUESTION IN EFFECT BECOMING THE DISSIDENTS' RADIO STATION - IS WHAT IS ESPECIALLY MADDENING TO THIS REGIME. THIS IS ALL THE MORE THE CASE IN THE CONTEXT CREATED BY OUR OWN GREATER EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND BY THE APPROACH OF BELGRADE, SINCE IT IS BECOMING CLEAR DISSIDENCE CANNOT BE STAMPED OUT ALL THAT EASILY. AS INDICATED IN OUR POLICY ASSESSMENT, I FEEL WE HAVE TO WATCH RFE'S ACTIVITIES MUCH MORE CLOSELY NOW AND WE WILL BE MAKING

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SUGGESTIONS SHORTLY ON HOW THIS MIGHT BE DONE. NONETHELESS, WITHOUT ACCEPTING ALL OF MACOVESCU'S IMAGERY ABOUT THE BOXER AND THE MAIDEN, I BELIEVE THAT SINCE RFE IS SUPPORTED BY THE US GOVERNMENT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO RECONCILE OURSELVES TO MORE PUBLIC AND FREQUENT ROMANIAN CRITICISM - SOMETHING WE HAVE NOT HAD HERE FOR SOME TIME, THOUGH FROM READING TELEGRAMS FROM OTHER EE POSTS I GATHER IT IS FAIRLY STANDARD FARE ELSEWHERE. A FAIR AMOUNT OF WHAT IS DONE HERE IS DONE SUFFICIENTLY CLUMSILY SO I AM CONVINCED IT HAS ANYTHING BUT THE EFFECT DESIRED. IN ADDITION, I DO NOT EXPECT ROMANIANS TO GO OVERBOARD OFTEN ON ANTI-US ELEMENTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE. THUS TODAY'S PRESS CARRIES NORMAL MENTION OF PRESIDENT'S MOST RECENT STATEMENT TO PRESS AND US CONGRESSIONAL VISIT TO CHINA. WE WILL BE MAKING SOME PROPOSALS SOON ON THE SORT OF COVERAGE OF US INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS WE FEEL VOA SHOULD BE STRESSING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD TO OFFSET THE MORE NEGATIVE ROMANIAN MEDIA PLAY WE EXPECT.

BARNES

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